

critical digest

305 FIFTH AVENUE, N. Y. 17, N. Y.
MU 2-0325 T. M. KRAUS

June 2, 1954 VOL VI No 38 \$10 year The Weekly New York City Theatre Newsletter

New York Theatre Diary

Carousel- City Center 6/2/54. Third production of the NYC Light Opera Co. With Jo Sullivan, Chris Robinson, John Conte and Bambi Lynn. Directed by William Hammerstein... The Homeward Look- Theatre De Lys- 6/3/54. John Carabedian and Philip Meister present a new comedy by Effie Young and Ernest Pagano. With Vicki Cummings, Roddy McDowell, and Pat Malone. Directed by Mark Gordon... Side by Side- Westport Country Playhouse 6/14/54. A new political comedy by William McGivern with Faye Emerson, directed by Luther Kennett. New play tryout.

Current Theatre Reviews

Montserrat- Barbizon Plaza 5/25/54. 3 cons and 1 so-so vote greeted the revival of the Lillian Hellman drama presented by Maurice Glazer, Jack and Harry Gressen. Production which had been staged earlier at Equity Library Theatre marks the first such to move to a professional production, on or off Broadway. The effort is commendable, but futile, summed up Shanley, Times. Edward Johnson playing the lead role handled on Broadway by Emlyn Williams falls short of what is required, Times man fears. Herridge, Post, panned it as a poor play, but of date, done statically. It is not performed with any great skill or inspiration, noted Hawkins, World Telegram & Sun. In spite of several minor criticisms, Sheaffer, Eagle, found it moving in spots. Show closed after 4 performances.

Dallas Report

Theatre '54, Dallas, Texas presented a week of repertory of 5 of the 9 new plays presented by Margo Jones this winter. Atkinson, Times, covered 3 of them. The Heel by Samuel Raphaelson was rated as one of those pieces of hackwork that entertain thousands of playgoers, enrich author and producer and isolate a few boyish dissenters. Critics should disqualify themselves from reviewing plays of this kind, he believes. The Purification by Tennessee Williams and The Apollo of Bellac by Jean Giraudoux were presented on one bill and complement each other perfect, critic reported. Former is tone poem for stage which evokes mood and imagery by the balanced sound of words, the music of style, antiphonal choral comments and guitar interpolations. The latter is a little gem of ironic humor that gaily satirizes the foibles of civilized people, always allusive, never literal. Both were perfectly presented.

NYC Amusement Tax Fought

The dangers of the proposed 5% amusement tax due to be levied by NYC was pointed out in many editorials. The tax is not going to help the theatre box office which is already in trouble, notes Times. Paper suggests passage of overnight tax on autos instead to raise the needed revenue. Theatre men should have a fair hearing before such an unfair tax is passed, urges Herald Tribune. The entertainment industry is to be floored instead of a political house cleaning, points out World Telegram & Sun. A higher real estate tax would be a wiser solution, suggests News, Variety and Billboard both warned that if NYC succeeds in passing such a tax, other cities will follow suit.

Other suggestions for means to raise revenue for NYC include a tax on juke boxes, an admission tax on free TV seats, and a levy on cars using city bridges to Long Island. Public hearings on the bill were held by the City Council on Tuesday.

' Off Broadway '

No Tears for Tony, a new comedy by Harro Meller and featuring Marina Flory will be presented June 1-6 at Provincetown Playhouse...Answer the Sphinx and Love-Game, both by T. Alexander Benn will be presented June 4-6 by the drama group of National Arts Club, 15 Grammercy Park...Downtown Players will present a program of drama and music June 4 at 242 W 14.

Tophatters will close its 16th season under direction of Robert Carson with the presentation of Jean Kerr's comedy Jenny Kissed Me, June 11-12 at Central YMCA, 55 Hanson Place, Brooklyn...Robinson Jeffers' The Cretan Women will be presented at the Provincetown Playhouse July 6, staged by Howard Marcuse.

Murder in Three Keys, the Dr. Erik Chisholm opera which opens the season of "Punch Opera" at Cherry Lane July 6, will feature Jane Craner, John Miller and Richard Roussin.

Off Broadway closings this week include Montserrat (See Page 1 for Reviews), Hamlet, Three Penny Opera, and The Boy With a Cart. Also Here Comes the Clowns, which had expected to run through June 20, closed due to illness of a leading player.

The Sea Gull closes at Phoenix on June 13. There are no plans to bring the production to Broadway.

' Vaudeville '

5th Anniversary of the return of vaudeville to Palace was welcomed by 3 critics. Bill headed by Lillian Roth and Smith & Dale continues through June 4. Reviewers were unanimous in their praise of Miss Roth, though they differed on merits of supporting acts. Hawkins, World Telegram & Sun, doubts if she will ever be out of work again. Hebride, Post, found program nostalgic. Roth's voice was tabbed as forthright and courageous, but with little emotion. She still thrills like an earlier Ethel Merman, rates Quinn, Mirror

' Theatre Film Notes '

Desire Under the Elms will be filmed by Paramount...Richard III starring Laurence Olivier will be filmed in color in England...Bullfight will be filmed in Mexico by Fiesta Productions with Rita Gam...The Seven Year Itch film to be produced by 20th Century Fox will star Marilyn Monroe...Oklahoma film may star Gordon MacRae...I Am A Camera will be filmed in London this fall by Rembrandt Films...Harry Belafonte and Pearl Bailey will be featured in Carole Jones film to be made by Otto Preminger...The Crucible may be produced in England.

' Theatre Book Notes '

"Bishop of Broadway", Craig Timberlake's biography of David Belasco will be published in Sept by Library Publishers..."Sophocles" by F J H Letters (Sheed & Ward) discusses the life and works in terms of Greek civilization...Teahouse of August Moon has been published by Putnam.

' Theatre Record Comments '

RCA's "Arias Sung and Acted" will prove both instructive and entertaining to the vast majority of music lovers and downright invaluable to students, praises Watt, News. Actors included on disc include Judith Anderson as Carmen, Deborah Kerr as Mimi, and Dennis King as Pagliacci.

' Off Broadway Map '

Instead of the usual "Playgoer's Guide" insert, CD presents to its subscribers an "Off Broadway Chart" which shows the locations of Greenwich Village theatres. This map was prepared by Allen Flagg. "Playgoer's Guide" with accurate, up to date information on current shows will resume next week.

' Green Room Department '

TWO ENGLISH VIEWS...London's West End theatres are divided on smoking, with about half allowing smoking during the show. "Stage" editorial condemns the practice. Playgoers should be reminded, the British trade paper states, that they are quick enough to complain when they cannot hear the acts. So why not, editorials asks, give them a fair chance to work under favourable conditions...The virtues of "dressing up" to attend the theatre were listed by Beverly Baxter, London Express. The males cleaning up freshens the mind, and presupposes a bath and light shave. In addition the dress industry, the restaurant business, the laundries, and the flower shops will all benefit.

SEASON'S TOTALS...Variety's annual roundup of hits and flops shows 7 hits listed for the 1953-54 season. They are Caine Mutiny, Confidential Clerk, Kind Sir, Sabrina Fair, Solid Gold Cadillac, Tea and Sympathy and Teahouse of the August Moon. Though all totals are not in yet, the trade paper lists 29 failures for the season.

ACTORS SIDELINES...The number of performers with solid business sidelines is surprisingly large, reports Burr, Playbill. Flower shops are run by Julie Haydon and Joshua Logan. Richard Tucker owns a piece goods store, Nadine Conner is a dress designer, James Melton trades in antique cars, Susan Reed runs an antique shop in Greenwich Village. Also Burl Ives has a goat farm, and Victor Borge has a chicken farm. Betty Comden runs an East Side gift shop, Eddie Albert produces educational films.

CRITICAL THOUGHTS...Summer theatre fans would like to see and would pay for more modern fare than they have been getting, suggests Chapman, News...Producers make a mistake in thinking playgoers are more interested in comfort than good shows, points out Kerr, Herald Tribune...Dramas which cause people to fight and scream over their merits or lack thereof are healthful for the theatre, notes Watts, Post.

RICE TRIBUTE...Times Drama Mailbag letter from Ken Parker states that the late Vernon Rice, drama editor of the NY Post, demonstrated unselfish kindness, understanding and complete interest in all little theatre groups struggling for existence and recognition. He firmly believed every actor, director, playwright and producer, no matter how unknown, was entitled to a "fair hearing."

INTERVIEW HI-LITES...No one wins success overnight, Carol Haney, The Pajama Game, told Peck, Times. You have to work for years, the dancer continued. The only thing that happens overnight is recognition. Not talent.

' Pros & Cons by TMK '

NYC government which in the past has done little or nothing to encourage any segment of the entertainment industry, now believes a 5% tax on amusement admissions is the solution to their financial mess. Lack of foresight in the past has seen the moving of the entire film industry, and a large segment of the TV industry out of town. The theatre fan who wants to see more and better plays in new playhouses

at lower prices CAN do something about it. First he must join the movement to kill the proposed new tax. Then in the same way he must join movements to demand from the City Council concessions for the building of new playhouses to make investments in same more attractive. Finally by attending more plays, and not just hit plays, prices will eventually come down. It's work, but worth it.

Actors Equity Association contract talks with the League of NY Theatres will continue until this Thursday, the day preceding Equity's scheduled annual meeting. Earlier last week Equity threatened a "staggered" strike under which one hit would have been closed per night. The union is seeking a \$95 weekly minimum wage for chorus workers, \$120 a week for all performers on the road, \$70 week for rehearsals, and a 5% employer pay roll contribution for a welfare fund. 700 members of Actors Equity and Chorus Equity are currently employed in Broadway shows.

Plays

Ondine will close July 3 due to film commitments, but may return in fall with Mai Zetterling in the role now acted by Audrey Hepburn...Leonard Sillman will present Mrs. Patterson next season starring Eartha Kitt...Eugene O'Neill's A Moon For The Misbegotten will be presented in the fall by The Ensemble, new repertory company. ...Black Opera musical being written by Harold Arlen and Johnny Mercer will be presented by same cast now touring Porgy And Bess.

People

May 31 is Replacement Day in NY Theatre. Some of the changes in current casts includes: Leora Dana, Tod Andrews and Frederic Worlock enter Sabrina Fair, Joan Fontaine and Anthony Perkins enter Tea and Sympathy, Barry Sullivan replaces Henry Fonda in Caine Mutiny Court Martial, Tony Randall and Barbara Baxley enter Oh Men, Oh Women, Harry Belafonte leaves Almanac, and Gordon Mills replaces Carl Low in King of Hearts. ...Frances Herridge has been named to succeed the late Vernon Rice as drama editor of NY Post. Miss Herridge will cover Off Broadway productions in addition to her present coverage of dance and music events...Shirley MacLaine subbed for several days for Carol Haney, The Pajama Game, latter having sprained her ankle.

Summer Playhouses

St. John Terrell's Lambertville, NJ Music Circus opens its 6th season June 4 with The Chocolate Soldier...Oakdale Musical Theatre at Wallingford, Conn, opens June 22...Tallulah Bankhead will tour in Dear Charles this summer.

Other Broadways

London production of The Fifth Season closed...Oklahoma will tour US in production transported by buses and trucks in Nick Mayo, Philip Mathias and Jean Barrerre presentation...Teahouse of August Moon with Oscar Karlweis won rave notices in Vienna ...Congress has passed a bill providing for the restoration of Washington, D.C.'s Ford Theatre.

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